



Vol. 4
Issue 4

THE Sovereign Nation

Publication of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement

THE REPUBLICAN VOICE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2001

A GAUNTLET OF SECTARIAN HATE

By Tom O'Hanlon

Proponents of the Belfast Agreement repeatedly assured the Irish electorate that the ratification of the accord would usher in a new political climate across the six-counties. However, recent images of children running a gauntlet of sectarian hatred in order to attend primary school have exposed these statements as illusory.

The history of the Holy Cross Primary School is symptomatic of the sectarian nature of the six-county state. The original Holy Cross School was situated in the grounds of the Ardoyne church. In 1969, when the Nationalist community was subject to a concerted program, Loyalist bigots invaded the church grounds, attacked the church and burnt the school to the ground along with many Nationalist homes in the surrounding area. The new school was rebuilt on the grounds of the existing St. Gabriel's Boys School. At the time, local Protestant church leaders were embarrassed by the attack on both the Ardoyne church and the Holy Cross School. In an effort to assist Ardoyne residents they suggested that an entrance to the school should be situated in the Loyalist district in order to facilitate ease of access for Nationalist residents.

In June of this year, the Holy Cross School once again made the headlines as a result of sectarian intimidation. On June 19, 600 members of the RUC and the British Army were deployed to Ardoyne road in order to cordon off the area because Loyalist protesters were preventing Nationalist residents from bringing their children to school. Many news agencies reported that this sectarian blockade originated with a dispute over the hoisting of several Loyalist flags along Ardoyne road. However, Nationalist residents have rejected this suggestion, and have reiterated that the protests represent an attempt to intimidate the Nationalist residents of North Belfast. On June 25, a bomb alert in the vicinity of the Holy Cross School raised political tension to a higher level.

September 3rd, the first day of the present school term, saw a continuation of this sectarian intimidation. Over seventy RUC/British

Army land rovers saturated the vicinity of Ardoyne road as Nationalist residents attempted to bring over 140 children to school. For many of the children, these, traumatic events were their first experiences of school life. In order to reach the school gates the children and their parents were forced to walk through a 300-yard corridor of sectarian hate. Loyalist protesters from the nearby Glenbryn estate roared 'up the UVF' and 'Go on the UDA' as the terrified children walked past. Loyalist thugs threw bricks and other missiles in an obvious attempt to terrorise and intimidate. On September 4, the Red Hand Defenders and the LVF threatened the children's parents to stay out of the area. On the same day Loyalist thugs threw a pipe bomb as the children were walking to the school. Their blatant indifference to the fate of these children was shown on TV screens around the world. Responding to these events, Fr. Aidan Troy, chairman of the school's board of governors, stated that 'the children's parents felt isolated and were in need of support from people in the politics and education world'.

One Nationalist parent commenting on the affect of the events on her child said 'She begged me not to make her go but I thought I had to, I had no idea it would be that bad. I will not let her go back to the school. I went through this in 1969 when I used to go to that school but this is far worse. It is unbelievable'. The Loyalist campaign of intimidation received worldwide media attention. The Chicago Tribune carried the news story under the headline "ALABAMA IN 60s VISITS ULSTER". The New York Times also ran a news story under the headline "SCHOOLGIRLS ATTACKED". The raw bigotry and naked sectarian hatred of the Loyalist protesters, shocked people around the world. The fact that the victims were innocent young school children reinforced the general sense of shock and revulsion as the Loyalist protest entered the second week.

By September 6, in an apparent change in tactics, the Loyalists refrained from using rocks and other projectiles and reverted to intimidating the parents and children by staging a silent



protest as the children were being brought to school. However, as the children's parents were returning home alone, they were greeted by the sounds of claxon horns, whistles and verbal abuse. Jim Potts, a key figure amongst Loyalist protesters, insisted that the protests would continue for the foreseeable future. This sectarian blockade takes place against a backdrop of continuing Loyalist pipe-bomb attacks against the Nationalist community, and a concerted campaign against the GAA in certain areas across the six-counties.

For three years we have heard of the so-called benefits of the peace process. Yet when placed under close scrutiny very little tangible change has actually been delivered across the six-counties. Loyalist gangs continue to wage their campaign of pipe-bomb attacks on a daily basis. The British Army continues to blight the landscape. In areas such as South Armagh, the British military presence continues to impede and obstruct the day-to-day lives of local residents.

The Loyalist blockade of the Holy Cross Girls School is indicative of the bigotry that infects the six-county state. This sectarian intimidation takes place during the European Year of the

Child. In the clearest possible terms this illustrates just how worthless are any concept of political and human rights in the six-county state. Proponents of the Belfast Agreement assured the Nationalist community that it would deliver parity of esteem. The Nationalist residents of North Belfast must now treat these statements with disdain. In a grotesque and absurd political statement, Unionist party member, John Taylor stated that 'Nationalists should apologise for treating Ardoyne Loyalists as second class citizens'.

Responding to the events surrounding the Loyalist blockade of the Holy Cross School, Rory Duggan, PRO, 32 County Sovereignty Movement stated "The 32 County Sovereignty Movement calls upon the Loyalist protesters of the Glenbryn estate to desist in their campaign of sectarian intimidation. We reiterate our support for the Nationalist residents of North Belfast who have to endure this disgraceful spectacle on a daily basis. Our position on these matters is totally clear: the rights of every child on the island of Ireland to an education, free from trauma and intimidation, must be upheld."

LOYALISTS ATTACK REPUBLICAN POW

As sectarian attacks on nationalist areas throughout the six counties increase, a sinister parallel is emerging from within Maghaberry Gaol. A gang of loyalist prisoners has viciously assaulted a Republican prisoner in Maghaberry Gaol.

John Martin Swift from Fermanagh was brutally set-upon in a wing recreation room by five loyalist inmates wielding snooker cues and an unplugged electric iron. This resulted in John receiving a serious head wound, multiple scarring to his face, a broken wrist, swollen jaw and bruising about his torso.

Most disturbing is the fact that the Loyalists involved came from different parts of the wing, and were allowed to organise and gain access to the recreation room by the prison officers on duty at the time. John was taken to an outside hospital where he received 17 staples to a severe head wound. A doctor later commented, "If the attack had continued for any longer John could have been killed".

On his return to Maghaberry he was detained in the hospital wing where he is currently being held. At a recent court hearing, John appeared in a wheelchair, and was clearly suffering great

discomfort. Despite the obvious seriousness of his injuries, John's wife was denied a visit with him.

This latest attack is just one (though perhaps the most serious) in a long line of incidents concerning Loyalist attacks on Republican prisoners. All of which are the result of the removal of political status brought about by the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Unfortunately, the likelihood of further attacks is inevitable.

Marian Price, chairperson of the Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association stated: "The latest attack by Loyalists on a

Republican prisoner in Maghaberry Gaol comes as no surprise given the conditions under which these Republican Prisoners are held. To disperse Republican Prisoners throughout a Gaol, ensuring they are heavily outnumbered in all wings and force their integration with Loyalists and Criminals, can clearly be seen for what it is - an attempt to criminalize them. It failed in the past, it will fail again. The restoration of Political Status to Republican prisoners is essential; we call on all true Republicans to campaign for its immediate return before a further tragedy occurs."

INSIDE

News
Page 2

News
Pages 3 & 4

Analysis
Page 5

Editorial
Page 6

International
Page 7

Prisoners
Page 8

RUC propaganda offensive launched

By Donal McHugh

IN A MOVE described as "a major concession" by the UUP's Michael McGimpsey, the SDLP has endorsed the British government's fundamentally flawed 'implementation plan' on reform of the RUC. The package of proposals, released on Friday, August 17th, details the steps the British government proposes to make towards implementing the Patten Report on policing. This report, Republicans will recall, was itself a deeply flawed document, and the new proposals represent a watered down version of its recommendations. Yet Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the SDLP, has declared the party's intention to "encourage nationalists, particularly the young, to join the new police service" on the basis of its proposed reforms.

The SDLP move has been welcomed by the Dublin government, which has thrown its own backing behind the British proposals. Bertie Ahern was quick to extol the virtues of the plan, claiming that the package can "comprehensively deliver the spirit and substance of Patten". The Catholic Church too has publicly endorsed the package, declaring that "the time is now right" for nationalists to participate in the proposed Policing Board.

The report was also welcomed by both the RUC Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, and the Northern Ireland Police Federation - the body that represents serving members of the RUC. In addition, it has received the support of the US State Department, a body who's familiarity with oppressive police forces is unrivaled, given its consistent backing for repressive right-wing dictatorships around the world.

As always, however, the real significance of the debate lies in what is left unsaid. The repeated emphasis on the extent to which the latest British proposals approach the recommendations of the Patten Report is deeply revealing. The nationalist parties may argue among themselves on this issue, but what is not disputed is the assumption that Patten is the standard by which such proposals should be judged. This is clearly a significant victory for the British government, representing a tacit acceptance that RUC 'reform' rather than disbandment is the way forward.

That this is a standard British negotiating tactic is clear from even a cursory analysis of the peace process as a whole. By offering the Stormont Agreement and then refusing to implement it, the British government has succeeded in removing even the prospect of a united Ireland from the political debate. A united Ireland is no longer on even Sinn Fein's agenda - what is on the agenda is the extent to which the Stormont Agreement will be implemented. Similarly, by offering the Patten Report on policing, then refusing to implement it, the disbandment of the RUC has been effectively sidelined. In both the political process and the policing debate, then, the standard by which a final settlement is judged will be the British government's own initial proposals, rather than the long forgotten original demands of the participants.

That Sinn Fein have fallen victim to this 'mindset of acceptance' is clear from their statements on the proposed reform package. Although the party rejected the British government's proposals as "seriously flawed", their reasons for doing so were revelatory. "The implementation plan", said spokesman Conor Murphy, "does not bridge the gap between the policing legislation and the threshold of Patten". The compromise, it is clear, has been internalized - the "threshold of Patten" is now the measure by which policing reform should be judged. The traditional slogan of "Disband the RUC", it seems, has finally been decommissioned in favour of "Implement Patten".

But not all Republicans have been deceived by the imperial conjurer's sleight of hand. Marian Price, a spokesperson for the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, slammed the British government's proposals as "totally inadequate". The nature of policing, she said, is fundamental to the establishment of basic human rights in the Six Counties. "The RUC is not, by any conventional definition, a police force. It is a paramilitary wing of the British government, whose primary purpose is the suppression of the Republican struggle. That is its raison d'être - the prevention and detection of crime comes a distant second. To be acceptable to Republicans, any proposed police force must be politically neutral. The RUC is not neutral - it is a combatant in the war. That is why it is incapable of reform. It must be disbanded and replaced by a community based police service, divorced from the political conflict. Cosmetic changes,



The RUC in action

such as those proposed in the implementation package, do not alter its basic ethos or rationale."

The British government's proposals have also been rejected by a number of human rights organizations, including Relatives for Justice, who have described the SDLP's acceptance as "premature". The Pat Finucane Centre in Derry, an internationally respected human rights body, has stated that "the implementation plan fails to deal with the institutional and cultural conditions within the RUC which have led to human rights abuses in the past and could lead to their occurring again".

Ever since its foundation in 1920, the concept of human rights, and indeed justice, has been alien to the RUC. The organization was originally established as the Six County successor to the Royal Irish Constabulary, a paramilitary colonial police force tasked with defending British rule in Ireland against 'subversive' Republicans. From its earliest years it viewed itself primarily as a counter-insurgency force, dedicated to maintaining Orange supremacy over the Six Counties' unwelcome Nationalist population. In the immediate aftermath of partition, it laid a firm foundation for its future activities by participating in widespread Loyalist pogroms that left many hundreds of Catholic civilians dead. Again in the 1930s, when the Orange state felt itself threatened by a growing labour movement of Catholic and

Protestant workers, it intervened to spark off a series of brutal sectarian riots, defusing the prospect of cross-community working class solidarity. Over the last thirty years, it has repeatedly resorted to a level of brutality against a civilian population unparalleled in modern day Western Europe.

Throughout the 20th century the RUC has acted as the primary bulwark of British rule in Ireland, and the principle defender of Unionist privilege. The cosmetic changes outlined in the British government's proposed reform package go no way towards addressing this fundamental issue. This unwillingness for fundamental change is reflected in the controversy over the proposed name for the 'reformed' organization. Although its 'working title' will be the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the name RUC will be retained in the organization's 'title deeds'.

The remainder of the proposals also leave much to be desired. Although a human rights oath is to be introduced for new recruits, it will not apply to the existing membership, whose disdain for human rights has been repeatedly demonstrated. There will be no screening process to weed out past violators of human rights among the force, although a blanket ban has been imposed on former IRA Volunteers applying for admission to the new body. The use of plastic bullets as a crowd control measure is also to be retained. In addition, the much-lauded Policing Board,

the body which will oversee the 'new' RUC, is essentially a toothless watchdog. Its power to conduct inquiries is restricted, and subject to veto by either the RUC's Chief Constable or the British Secretary of State. The scope of any proposed inquiry is also subject to the demands of 'national security'. Indeed, the proposed make-up of this body calls into question the necessity of these safeguards. Of its 19 members, 14 are to be appointed by the British government or pro-British parties; in comparison, only 5 seats are reserved for Nationalist nominations. In fact, the only substantive proposals in the reform package - such as changes to the RUC's Special Branch - are dependant on the whim of the Chief Constable, i.e. his assessment of the "security situation".

It is clear, then, that the British government's proposed 'implementation plan' for policing reform is fundamentally flawed. It does not provide the basis for an independent, politically neutral police service for the Six Counties. It merely offers cosmetic surgery for the existing RUC. As such, it can not be supported by Republicans. The fundamental nature of policing has not yet been addressed. As Marian Price has stated, a neutral police force can not be a combatant in the political conflict. Six County policing must be divorced from the British war effort. The first step along that path is the immediate disbandment of the RUC.

Omagh case - whose agenda?

By Donal McHugh

A GROUP representing relatives of a number of people killed in the Omagh bombing of 1998 has begun a civil case in the Northern courts against five men it claims were involved in the attack. The Omagh Victims' Legal Trust is also suing the "Real IRA" for financial damages.

Over 100 people were arrested by the security forces, North and South, in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing. Of the five men named in the civil suit, four were arrested for questioning in this nationwide roundup, but were later released without charge. One was subsequently charged by Gardai with 'conspiracy to cause an explosion'. His case is due before the non-jury Special Criminal Court in October. The fifth man has never been questioned by police in relation to the attack.

Yet the launch of the civil action was publicly welcomed by senior figures in the RUC and Gardai, who pledged their full support to the relatives involved. It also received near unanimous backing from the political elite north and south of the border, along with the vocal support of the Irish and British media establishments. This official patronage comes despite police admissions that they have no evidence to back up their loudly voiced "suspensions", although it must be said that this lack of evidence has never in the past prevented them from privately briefing media figures on the alleged involvement of individuals.

Such overwhelming support from the reactionary political establishment must call into question the motivation behind the launch of this legal action. Yet the issue has never been adequately addressed by the media, and numerous questions remain unanswered. The individuals involved have been shielded from criticism by a virtual media blackout - any questioning of their motivation, it is implied, would be somehow akin to

insulting or demeaning the people who lost their lives. Yet it is clear that their legal action serves a security force agenda, and the presence of shadowy 'financial backers' in the wings only serves to heighten suspicions of political manipulation.

The signing of the Good Friday Agreement had provided the governments in London and Dublin with a long sought victory - the political neutralization of radical Republicanism. The security forces, north and south, were eager to strike a similarly decisive blow against the Republican armed struggle. The tragic deaths of 29 civilians in Omagh provided them with a perfect opportunity, and it was grasped greedily.

A nationwide witch-hunt was immediately launched to 'root out' so-called 'dissident' Republicans. The mass media colluded in an unprecedented campaign of personalized demonization, targeting a number of individuals and their families. The Daily Mail, one of Britain's most virulently anti-Irish tabloids, was one of the first to leap on the bandwagon. Within 24 hours of the bombing, its reporters were blockading the home of one prominent Republican, while the paper itself had embarked on a campaign of naming those it suspected of involvement in the armed struggle. The orgy of condemnation that followed was indicative of a political culture wherein, rather than just report events, the media makes and shapes the news according to its own agenda. Media figures competed with one another in an attempt to whip up a popular frenzy against Republicans, while security force 'sources' provided a plethora of lurid tales to fuel press speculation.

The recent announcement by the Daily Mail that it will be providing financial backing for the Omagh group's legal action is consistent with its long-standing opposition to the Irish freedom struggle. Other backers have not been so upfront. Stanley McCombe, a spokesman for the

group, has stated that "The people who are heading up the fund are very well-known people in London who move in the circles of very rich people." Just who these wealthy benefactors are, or why they are so "well-known", remains shrouded in mystery.

But Republicans will be well aware of the precedents for such cynical manipulation of vulnerable victims and their families. The policy of attacking Republicanism through the manipulation of civilian 'front organizations' has been a long-standing British tactic. A particularly notorious example is the Families Against Intimidation and Terror grouping - a British government-backed organization which received considerable support and attention from the media throughout the mid-1990s. The group's leading light, Vincent McKenna, was later exposed as a life long paedophile, who had sexually abused his own daughter over a 12 year period. McKenna, who had been an IRA Volunteer for a short period in his youth, made much of his former Republican connections in publicly attacking the IRA. Just how long British Intelligence had been privy to information on his sexual perversions is a question that may never be answered. A further blow to the group came when another leading figure, Pastor Clifford Peebles, was arrested while attempting to pipe-bomb Catholic homes. With the group thoroughly discredited, British support was withdrawn and media interest evaporated. The presumably genuine concerns of many of its members had, for their backers in the British government, been nothing more than a convenient stick with which to beat Republicans. Once their utility had been exhausted, they were cynically and unceremoniously abandoned.

As legal action against the five men begins, numerous questions remain to be answered. On what information is the case based, and where has this information come

from? Who are the shadowy financial backers bankrolling the proceedings, and what is their agenda? Is this merely another attempt by British Intelligence at 'felon setting'? If evidence exists against these men, why have no charges been brought by the RUC or Gardai? And after a three year demonization campaign by the media, how is a fair trial possible under any circumstances?

Even more intriguing issues also remain to be addressed. What, for example, is to be made of the allegation raised by Laurence Rushe, whose wife died in the explosion, of prior MI5/RUC knowledge of the bombing? He has also challenged the official RUC explanation for the appalling death toll, stating that clear evidence emerged from his wife's inquest that the IRA warning had contained the exact location of the bomb. The recent statement by former British agent 'Kevin Fulton', that he provided the RUC with details, including the registration number, of the car to be used several days before the bombing, would seem to substantiate these claims. The huge loss of civilian life that followed was undoubtedly a propaganda coup for the British Security Services. The question that must now be asked is to what extent were the activities of British Intelligence agents responsible for laying the groundwork for the disaster?

The bombing of Omagh, all Republicans will agree, was an appalling tragedy; though unintentional, the death toll that resulted will hang as a mark of shame over the Republican Movement for many years to come. The anger of victims' families, therefore, is understandable. Their cynical exploitation by counter-revolutionary elements in the media and political elite, however, only serves to further expose their contempt for the victims of the war in Ireland. Only a full and independent public enquiry will establish the true facts of what happened in Omagh.

Loyalist pogrom continues

THE SUMMER months are traditionally a time when nationalists and republicans across the six counties come under increasing threat from loyalist paramilitaries. This summer has proven to be no exception. In fact, so far this year there have been four times the number of pipe, blast, nail and petrol bomb attacks than there were for the same period last year. The response of the RUC has not been surprising with very few loyalists been charged with these attacks. Below is a list of some of the more serious attacks this summer.

- 11th June** - Catholic church burned down in Glengormley.
- 12th June** - petrol bomb attack on families in Portadown.
- 18th June** - pipe bomb attack on home in Larne.
- 19th June** - Catholic postmen in south Belfast forced to move after death threats.
- 20th June** - pipe bomb attack on family in north Belfast.
- 21st June** - petrol bomb attacks on families in north Belfast.
- 23rd June** - Catholic man shot dead in Coleraine.
- 24th June** - pipe bomb attack in Newtownabbey.
- 26th June** - Catholic man shot and wounded in north Belfast.
- 29th June** - nail bomb attack in south Belfast.
- 29th June** - pipe bomb attack in Derry city.
- 30th June** - blast bomb attack on family in north Belfast.
- 5th July** - Catholic man shot dead in Coleraine.
- 11th July** - attempted loyalist car bombing in Cargin, Co. Antrim.
- 15th July** - pipe bomb attack on family in Armoy, Co. Antrim.
- 16th July** - petrol bomb attacks on families in east Belfast
- 18th July** - nail bomb attacks in north and east Belfast.
- 20th July** - gun attack on community centre in north Belfast.
- 21st July** - staff at Royal Victoria Hospital threatened by loyalists.
- 22nd July** - pipe bomb attack on family in north Belfast.
- 22nd July** - pipe bomb attack on family in Coleraine.
- 23rd July** - petrol bomb attack on family in Lisburn.
- 26th July** - pipe bomb defused in Coleraine.
- 26th July** - pipe bomb attack in north Belfast.
- 28th July** - man stabbed in south Belfast by loyalists.
- 31st July** - RHD admit stabbing Catholic man in Glengormley.
- 31st July** - pipe bomb left under car in Armagh city.
- 31st July** - Protestant man, mistaken for a Catholic, shot dead in Glengormley.
- 1st August** - pipe bombs discovered in Portrush.
- 2nd August** - pipe bomb attack on family in Newtownstewart.
- 7th August** - pipe bomb defused in Newtownstewart.
- 13th August** - 14 year old injured by blast bomb in north Belfast.
- 15th August** - hoax pipe bombs found in Magherafelt, Maghera and Moneymore, Co. Derry.
- 15th August** - two teenage girls attacked by loyalists in north Belfast.
- 16th August** - pipe bomb attack on family in north Belfast.
- 16th August** - arson attack on St Peter's church, near Lisburn.
- 20th August** - pipe bomb attacks on two families in Ballymena.
- 23rd August** - three pipe bombs discovered in Derry GAA grounds.

The trail of military surrender

By Tom O'Hanlon

DURING the course of a diplomatic visit to the US in March 1995, Patrick Mayhew outlined three 'democratic tests' that the Provisional movement would have to pass before they could enter all-party talks. Firstly, the PIRA had to publicly announce its willingness to disarm. Secondly, agreement had to be reached concerning the practicalities of disarmament, and thirdly, the PIRA had to initiate actual decommissioning. These preconditions subsequently entered the political lexicon of the 'peace-process' as 'Washington Three'. The Provisional leadership dismissed these British demands as stalling tactics that were politically unattainable and unrealistic. 'Not a bullet, not an ounce' was their succinct response. Who in 1995 could have forecast that within six years the Provisional leadership would militarily capitulate and comply with these British terms of surrender?

On August 6, the Independent International Commission for Decommissioning (IICD) issued a public statement that was hailed as an 'historic breakthrough' by the bourgeois press and the political establishments in London and Dublin. The IICD statement read: 'In a recent meeting with the commission, the IRA representative proposed a method for putting IRA arms completely and verifiably beyond use'. The statement continued: 'We believe that this proposal initiates a

process that will put IRA arms completely and verifiably beyond use'.

Two days after the IICD statement, the Provisional leadership issued a public statement confirming its decision to decommission its weaponry. Over the last six years, we have become accustomed to the Provisional movement consistently repeating its refusal to move on the issue of arms. So what were the chain of events that led this grotesque political u-turn? More importantly, what are the political implications of this ignominious military capitulation by the Provisional leadership?

Since 1995 the Provisional leadership has sought to erode the militancy of its own support base, thus creating the environment where it would be possible to meet the demands of the British government as outlined in 'Washington three'.

In September 1997, the Sinn Féin leadership controversially subscribed to the Mitchell principles. This decision caused much consternation within the ranks of the Provisional movement. It represented the first psychological gambit on behalf of the Provisional leadership in preparing its grassroots for the inevitable military capitulation that lay ahead, even though the PIRA's public position on decommissioning at this time was one of complete rejection.

The first indication of the Provisional leadership's real intentions regarding decommissioning

came in December 1999, when the PIRA announced it had appointed a representative to liaise and negotiate with the IICD. Yet throughout this period the Republican grassroots were continually reassured that decommissioning would never take place.

After Mandelson suspended the Stormont institutions in February 2000, the PIRA withdrew all contact with the IICD in protest. But after the restoration of the institutions, contact with the IICD was renewed. By May 2000, the deceit and political dishonesty of the Provisional leadership was for the first time revealed when the PIRA publicly announced that they were prepared to initiate a process that would completely and verifiably put PIRA arms beyond use. Between May 2000 and July 2001, there were several inspections of IRA arms dumps. This series of inspections compromised those arms dumps, and in effect this amounted to decommissioning. Undoubtedly the line that was being sold to the Provisional support base was that 'these dumps have been compromised by the inspections, the equipment is old and redundant, so why not destroy these stockpiles to achieve political advantage?' And so the capitulation continued.

The PIRA offer of August 8 to decommission its arms has been withdrawn in response to Reid's suspension of the Stormont institutions. However, it is widely accepted that

this offer will be restored at a later date. As of August 8, their decision to decommission has been accepted in principle.

The route the Provisional leadership has travelled over the past six years has been carefully surveyed in advance. Ever mindful of Republican hostility to decommissioning, they engineered a situation whereby an acceptance of their decision to decommission would evolve over a period of time. The militancy of the Provisional's support base was decommissioned in advance of their military arsenal.

On a cold March morning in 1995, Patrick Mayhew outlined the terms of 'Washington three' that had to be met by the Provisional movement prior to their entry to all party talks. The demands of the British are unaltered, but their context has changed. The Provisional movement now have to comply with these demands in order to acquire British ministerial portfolios.

Let the people of Ireland never forget who initiated these demands. The British State is the architect of the decommissioning project. In complying with these British terms of surrender, the Provisional movement will become the first Republican organisation in Irish history to decommission its arms at the behest of a British government. In completing this act they will stand condemned at the bar of Irish history.

London bombed

By Tom O'Hanlon

RECENT mischievous press speculation concerning the imminent demise of Ogligh na hEireann (IRA) was swiftly swept to one side in the aftermath of the recent car bomb explosion in Ealing Broadway. On the morning after the audacious attack, the Irish Times security editor, Jim Cusack wrote: "Barely a month ago British and Irish government sources were telling journalists that the group known as the Real IRA was in disarray and could be finished as a terrorist organisation. These briefings were based on the fact that the Garda had made several arrests and that leading figures in the organisation were either behind bars or apparently no longer affiliated with the group".

However, the article continued: "The Real IRA it appears has undergone a metamorphosis. It has a new leadership and has recruited and trained new members who have never previously come to the attention of the Garda or British authorities".

The car bomb attack at Ealing Broadway was the culmination of a series of recent attacks, all of which were attributed to Ogligh na hEireann. The revolutionary significance of these operations will not go unnoticed by policy makers in London and Dublin. Their immediate political impact has forced the bourgeois press to re-evaluate their predictions concerning the imminent demise of armed resistance to British rule in Ireland.

The first of these series of attacks took place in south County Down. During the evening of July 20th, a gun and bomb attack was launched against Castwellan RUC Station. It was the second armed attack on the station in the last nine months. After a bomb explosion inside the perimeter

wall, locals reported hearing a volley of shots being fired at the station. Immediately after the attack, the RUC and the British Army sealed off the surrounding area. However, their efforts proved fruitless as no IRA volunteers were captured.

Late on Monday July 23rd, an explosive device was thrown at an RUC station in Lurgan, County Armagh. The device landed inside the perimeter fence, close to the station. But British Army bomb disposal teams were fortunate in that they had time to move in and defuse the device. Responding to the attack, RUC district commander Ian Chapman said: "This was a reckless attack on men and women under my command. Someone could easily have been killed if the device had exploded".

On the morning of August 1st, a silver Volvo estate was parked opposite the main terminal of Belfast International Airport. The car bomb contained 44lbs of explosives. At 4.55am phone warnings using recognised code words were relayed to the Irish News and other Belfast newspapers. British army bomb disposal teams immediately moved in to the Airport car park and carried out two controlled explosions on the car bomb. As a result of the controlled explosions, Belfast International Airport remained closed throughout the rest of the day. British Army personnel attributed the car bomb attack to Ogligh na hEireann.

One day after the bomb attack at Belfast International Airport, a 100lb car bomb exploded in the centre of Ealing Broadway, London, causing in excess of £10 million in structural damage. Just after 11 o'clock on the night of August 2nd, a grey Saab 9000 five-door saloon was driven into the centre of Ealing Broadway. At 11.57 pm, the 100lb car bomb detonated causing extensive damage.



The aftermath of the IRA's Ealing bomb

Contrary to media disinformation, several accurate phone warnings were given, and it has subsequently emerged that the car's hazard lights were left on to ensure that the immediate vicinity around the car was cleared of all civilians. Following the attack, there has been a significant increase in security on the streets of London, with armed checkpoints and patrols increasing on a daily basis. Once again the political price of Britain's occupation of Ireland is manifest on the streets of London.

In Derry on August 22nd, a 140lb bomb was placed on the Derry-to-Belfast rail line. After receiving several coded warnings, British Army bomb disposal teams moved in to defuse the device. RUC Superintendent Stewart Tosh said that 'the bomb represented a substantial risk to military personnel who were dealing with the device'. The

Foyle Bridge, which runs directly over the bombsite, was reopened on Thursday 23rd after being closed for 24 hours. A British Army spokesperson stated that the bomb attack was the work of Ogligh na hEireann.

These audacious attacks illustrate in the clearest possible terms that armed resistance to British rule in Ireland will continue for as long as Britain exercises control over any part of Ireland.

These operations that have been attributed to Ogligh na hEireann, take place against a political backdrop that has seen the Provisional leadership agree in principle to destroy their weaponry at the behest of the British government. Although the Provisionals have withdrawn their proposal 'to put their arms completely and verifiably beyond use', there can be no doubt that the Provisional's original offer to decommission will find its way back on to

the negotiating table. Weapons that were procured to terminate British rule in Ireland are now to be destroyed in order to clear the path for members of the Provisional movement to resume their British ministerial portfolios. While we have grown accustomed to the Provisional leadership's political capitulations, we have now finally witnessed the ultimate military capitulation.

Yet, these sad ignominious facts serve a purpose in that they finally clear the political battlefield. The Republican people of Ireland are now left with a clear political choice: Support the Provisional leadership in their stated intention of administering British rule in Ireland or help rebuild the revolutionary movement that refuses to desist until British rule in Ireland is consigned to the dustbin of history.

Reid suspends Assembly

By Tom O'Hanlon

ON August 10, the Irish people witnessed yet another example of a British government bowing to Ulster Unionist threats, when John Reid suspended the Stormont institutions under Section (3) of the Northern Ireland Act, 2000. Reid's recent decision replicates Peter Mandelson's suspension of February 2000. What, we may ask, have both acts of suspension got in common? The answer is that both suspensions arose as a result of the Provisional movement's delay in decommissioning its weaponry at the behest of the London government and the Unionist political establishment.

In February 2000, General John De Chastelain published a report on behalf of the Independent International Commission for Decommissioning (IICD). The report revealed that despite the appointment of a PIRA representative to liaise with the disarmament body, the IICD 'had received no information from the IRA as to when decommissioning will start'. Upon receiving this report, Peter Mandelson suspended the Stormont institutions to a chorus of political vitriol emanating from the 'pan-nationalist alliance'. In the aftermath of the February 2000 suspension, the PIRA broke off all contact with the IICD.

Between February and May 2000, the London and Dublin governments along with all of the constitutional par-

ties attempted to agree a set of formulae that would ensure the full implementation of the Belfast agreement. On May 5 2000, the PIRA for the first time publicly announced that it was prepared to initiate a process that 'will completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use'. Three weeks after the PIRA statement, David Trimble secured UUP backing to re-enter the power sharing assembly. On May 29 2000, Peter Mandelson restored the Stormont institutions on the basis of the commitment outlined in the PIRA statement of May 5.

Between May 2000 and July 2001, there were three inspections of PIRA arms dumps by members of the IICD. After each inspection, the two arms inspectors reported to the British government that the PIRA arms dumps had remained sealed. The Stormont institutions survived under intensive care, but the unresolved question of actual PIRA decommissioning continued to hang over the 'peace process'. Ulster Unionist frustration at that failure of the PIRA to actually decommission forced David Trimble to resign as first minister on July 1, triggering a six-week period within which the issue of actual decommissioning had to be resolved.

On August 6 2001, the IICD announced that in a recent meeting with the disarmament body the PIRA representative 'proposed a method for putting IRA arms completely and verifiably beyond use'. Two days later, the PIRA issued a statement

confirming this fact. While the PIRA and the IICD reached agreement concerning an undisclosed method with which to initiate decommissioning, no actual timetable for decommissioning had been agreed. Arising from this fact, David Trimble announced his refusal to stand for re-election as first minister. The British government then moved to suspend the Stormont institutions for a brief period, choosing to avoid elections and thus creating another deadline of September 23rd, by which the issue of actual PIRA decommissioning has to be resolved. Following Reid's suspension of the Stormont institutions, the PIRA withdrew their proposals from the IICD, a response that was somewhat similar to their actions following Mandelson's suspension of February 2000.

The suspension of the Stormont institutions by Reid and Mandelson, arising from delays in achieving actual PIRA decommissioning, poses many political questions for proponents of the Belfast agreement.

For the past three years, advocates of the Belfast agreement have told us that the agreement is a legally binding international agreement, the endorsement and implementation of which represents an act of self-determination by the Irish people. Yet the suspensions of the Stormont institutions by Reid and Mandelson prove these political statements to be illusory. The unilateral political vetoes exercised by Reid and Mandelson

clearly illustrates that British sovereignty over the six-counties reigns supreme. The endorsement and implementation of the Belfast agreement cannot represent an exercise in self-determination by the Irish people, as this inalienable right can only be exercised free from external impediment.

"It is clear the wish of the Irish people play no part in this process. What we have witnessed puts lie to the claim by the revisionists and pro-agreement parties that there is no veto in this process. It is blatantly obvious the British Government can and will do this again and again to protect their interests."

The present crisis in the 'peace-process' has produced a tragic but truly astonishing state of affairs. The most absurd political scenario in recent Irish history arises from the fact that the future survival of the Belfast agreement rests solely on the PIRA's willingness to decommission. A movement that procured its stockpile of weaponry to terminate British rule in Ireland is now being faced with the political offer of administering British rule by destroying these very same armaments that were intended to end the occupation.

This leads us to a fundamental issue that lies at the heart of the so-called Irish peace-process. Many Irish republican opponents of the process are of the opinion that from the very outset it was founded and dependent upon the political and mil-

itary surrender of Irish Republicanism. It was apparent from the minutiae of the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document, that any subsequent political agreement would be founded upon the Unionist veto. An acceptance of the Unionist veto was the political toll that the Provisional movement had to pay to enter the process. While the political capitulation of the Provisional movement was an essential pre-requisite for their entry into all party talks, the military surrender of the Provisional movement remains an absolute necessity for the survival of the Belfast agreement. When viewed in its totality, the so-called Irish peace-process seems to achieve the longstanding aims and objectives of the British state over the last thirty years: the political and military defeat of Irish Republicanism as a revolutionary political project. But will the endeavours of the British state be successful at this moment in time?

With the signing of the Belfast agreement, the mandarins in Whitehall may feel that they have achieved a memorable victory in securing the political and military surrender of the Provisional movement. However, time will prove their victory hollow. The images of shattered buildings around Ealing Broadway may persuade the British political establishment to reassess their claims of political victory in Ireland.

Two soldiers: one honoured, one forgotten

By Emmet McGuinness

ON THE 15th July 1976, Jim Monaghan from Dublin, an IRA prisoner in Portlaoise Prison, made an unsuccessful bid to escape while appearing at the Special Criminal Court in Dublin's Green Street. He was accompanied in court that day by four other Republican prisoners, one of whom, Michael O'Rourke, successfully escaped. During the lunchtime recess, Jim Monaghan was let out of the holding cell to go to the toilet. On his return he produced an explosive charge which blew the lock on the door, affecting their escape to the street outside. Without the coordinated help of comrades on the outside, four of the five were recaptured and taken to the Bridewell Garda Station.

Three days earlier, on the 12th July 1976, there arrived in Dublin a man by the name of Christopher Biggs. Biggs, we are told, already had a very full life before he came to Dublin that summer. Indeed, like many of his generation, he had enjoyed a packed life before he had even entered the Diplomatic Service. After university, Biggs joined the British Army in 1941 and eventually fought in the key battle in North Africa, El Alamein, in the Eight Army, where he lost an eye. In a briefing with journalists on his arrival in Dublin, Biggs concluded with a remark which formed the core of his approach to the political situation in the North of Ireland. "I have", he said, "one prejudice acquired during the Second World War, a very distinct and strong prej-

udice against violence for political ends."

For Republican prisoners in Portlaoise, both events were to have profound effects, effects which would cast a dark shadow over that summer of 1976. After the capture of Jim Monaghan, all four were returned to Portlaoise Prison and subjected to severe interrogation and a full physical strip search. Believing that the explosives used that morning had been smuggled from the prison, that night Gardaí and prison warders entered the cells for special searches. These searches set a precedent for brutal night searches that were to continue for several years. For the IRA prisoners who were to endure these first night searches, the brutality inflicted was extreme compared to previous searches. Prison management was venting its anger on the prisoners because of the success of O'Rourke's escape. Ordinary screws were encouraged to completely strip and physically search the prisoners by whatever means necessary. Two prisoners suffered particularly bad beatings, but despite their visible injuries no medical attention was allowed.

Prison management's response to the escape was as predictable as it was punitive. Next morning the contents of the cells were removed and the prisoners were left with nothing but a mattress, a blanket and four walls to stare at. The Republican population within the prison were sleeping on the floor. A few days later when the cells were reopened the prisoners realized that free association, a concession

won previously by hunger strikes, was being withdrawn. The government saw this as their opportunity to strip the prisoners of their rights. Agreements and concessions won through years of prison struggle were considered no longer binding. It was obvious that Special Category status was now being phased out.

Attempts at negotiation proved fruitless, and lack of dialogue created a vacuum which would inevitably be filled by confrontation and conflict. With no alternative open to them, the prisoners began to consider forms of protest which would at once register the seriousness with which they viewed the developing situation, and their determination to confront it. They would have to do something which would grab the media headlines and focus public attention on the situation, hopefully leading to pressure on the government to address the problem. On the 24th July 1976 the Republican prisoners opted to burn the prison.

Also on the 24th July 1976, and sixty miles from the turmoil in Portlaoise Prison, Christopher Biggs who had been Ambassador for precisely 12 days was blown up by an IRA bomb.

Since the main purpose for burning the prison was to focus public attention on the dreadful conditions in Portlaoise, the timing of the prisoners' action could not have been worse. The assassination of the British Ambassador was a major military, political and propaganda coup for the IRA, and captured both national and international media

headlines. This meant that the burning lost much of its value in terms of highlighting conditions in the prison. Public awareness was little better after the burning than it was before. The assassination of a foreign diplomat within the state was a major embarrassment for the Dublin government internationally too. It gave the impression of instability and undermined the coalition government in the eyes of the world. Already bent on destroying the prisoners' command structures, it would be even less inclined now to look favourably on anyone supporting their cause.

Twenty-five years on and Christopher Biggs is remembered with fondness by his peers. An address by the current British Ambassador, Sir Ivor Roberts KCMG, at the Christopher Ewart Biggs Memorial Service described him as a "delightful friend, a remarkable raconteur and an ornament to his profession."

Twenty-five years on, and languishing in a Colombian prison, Jim Monaghan is denied by his own. Almost twenty-five years to the day, and Jim Monaghan is now an acute embarrassment to the Sinn Féin leadership. The party's chief whip, Alex Maskey, denied ever knowing Jim Monaghan, stating "It was not the business of Sinn Féin, so I don't have to give an explanation." No, Alex, you don't have to give an explanation, your agenda is already crystal clear.

Vantage Point

The view from the cuckoo's nest

Confusion reigned at the SN office recently when Fine Gael leader Michael Noonan, speaking at the party's Michael Collins commemoration at Beal na mBlath, condemned the "use of violence to achieve political ends". Surely even the assembled Blueshirts could not fail to be nauseated by this sickening outbreak of hypocrisy? But all was not at it seemed. It now appears that Noonan was speaking at a commemoration for little known Cork pacifist Michael Collins, who in 1916 organized a local petition for a British withdrawal. A forgotten hero of Irish history, Collin's petition was, in fact, the main motivation behind Britain's subsequent withdrawal from the 26 counties....

Vantage Point admits to shedding a tear over the recent demise of Sir Graham Shillington, who commanded the RUC from 1970 to '73. Other prominent mourners included the current Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, who was quick to praise his predecessor's record. "He was a man of great vision", commented Flanagan on the BBC news, "I looked up to him as a role model". And indeed there was much to admire about the man. His introduction of internment was a stunning success, and the decision to use tear gas against nationalist protesters in Derry truly inspired. And surely only a pedant could find fault with his handling of Bloody Sunday. Sir Graham - a true man of the people, and tireless crusader for justice. He will be sorely missed by the Nationalist community.

Like many SN readers, Vantage Point is an avid follower of the domestic dramas of England's Royal family. A 'get well soon' card was immediately dispatched, therefore, when news came through of Prince Charles' recent accident. The Prince, as royal watchers will recall, was knocked unconscious after being thrown from his horse during a polo match. It is believed that the CIRA have claimed responsibility for the incident.

Vantage Point was delighted to see the Provisional Movement once again prove its Far Away Revolutionary Credentials. Intrigued by the story of the three amigos, VP contacted a Sinn Féin spokesperson for more information. "Never 'eard of 'em", he replied, standing in front of a Release The Castlereagh Five mural. "But you must have", a puzzled Vantage Point responded, "one of them was on your Ard Comhairle." The Shinner smiled. "Ah, but that was a long time ago and we're a very different party now, you know." When it was pointed out that of the others, one was a Sinn Féin director of elections and the other was organizing Grizzly's forthcoming trip to Cuba, the Shinner finally lost patience. "I've had enough of these silly questions. You people just can't see the bigger picture. Now, why don't you just farc-off..."

Harsh reality bites 'Celtic Tiger'

By Niamh Carroll

THE RECENT announcement by multinationals Gateway and General Semiconductors that they are closing down their Irish operations with the loss of 1,500 jobs was greeted with understandable alarm. So far this year, almost 5,000 jobs have been lost in the high-tech sector. If the IT industry in Ireland does go into meltdown in the next few years, it will have major implications for the Celtic Tiger economy.

The Celtic Tiger came about as the result of a convergence of several factors. Ireland has a young, educated, English-speaking workforce, which works for pay that is at the bottom end of the EU scale (The US Dept of Labour estimates that the average hourly compensation for an Irish worker is only half that of the German worker). Ireland's membership of the EU trading bloc is attractive to foreign companies who desire an EU base for their operations. In the 1990s Ireland benefited in terms of massive EU structural funds. However, probably the most crucial factor in the performance of the economy has been the foreign investment of US - mainly computer - companies in Ireland. Ireland was attractive to these companies due to the above reasons and also because of its very low Corporation Tax rates. Because of various allowances, the effective tax rate for companies is often less than 10 per cent. This compares to Corporation Tax rates of 30 per cent in Britain and 35 per cent in the US. One result of low Corporation Tax rates is that the government has less money to spend on basic services such as health and education. This will be discussed further below.

A worrying aspect for the Irish economy is that several of the above factors are now under serious threat. For example, Ireland will no longer be the beneficiary of huge EU grants. Secondly, as the prospect of the US going into recession increases, the likelihood of its companies investing abroad decreases. This recession will have a negative impact on America's IT sector, and the knock-on

effects on the IT-reliant Irish economy will be devastating. This is already happening with just about every IT multi-national suffering a drop in sales and profits.

Of course not all Irish people have benefited from the Celtic Tiger. In every Irish city, town and village, there are people living in poverty. A 1999 UN Human Development Report stated that Ireland has the second highest level of poverty in the developed world. Last month, the ESRI published a study that shows that the gap between rich and poor in Ireland is continuing to grow. The study indicates that the proportion of people living below the poverty line rose from 17.4 per cent in 1994 to just over 20 per cent in 1998. This is happening as a direct result of government policy. Government can control the distribution of wealth through its budgets but as the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI) points out the last four budgets increased take-home income of the better off more substantially than those on social welfare payments. In June of this year, the government announced a new plan to tackle poverty and social exclusion. CORI dismissed it as 'an insult to poor people'. It is only in the past few years though that the lengths the wealthy elite are willing to go to, to protect their wealth, were exposed. The most notorious of these was the Ansbacher accounts, where one hundred and twenty-one of the richest people in Ireland (including senior political figures) lodged tens of millions of pounds in a secret offshore account to avoid paying taxes.

Social exclusion in Ireland is probably most stark in the area of health. The health service is chronically under funded and as a result is in a disgraceful condition. According to the Institute of Public Health: those who are members of the lowest socio-economic group are 100 per cent more likely to die of cancer than higher socio-economic groups, 120 per cent more likely to suffer strokes, and 200 per cent more vulnerable to lung disease and other respiratory complaints. The elimination of these inequalities would result in a reduction, every year, of 6,000 premature deaths in Ireland. Health and poverty are also linked with homeless-

ness. In its annual report this year, the Dublin Simon Community estimated that as many as 50 per cent - 1,500 - of homeless people in Ireland have severe mental health problems. This is up from an estimated 35 per cent five years ago.

Education may well be one of the pillars of the Celtic Tiger but a significant section of the Irish people have been left behind in this area. In northern Europe, Ireland has the highest proportion of its workforce without second-level qualifications. Due to under funding, Ireland also has one of the highest pupil-teacher ratios in OECD countries and within the EU, Ireland has the lowest expenditure per primary school student relative to GDP.

The decrease in unemployment is one of the most obvious benefits of the Celtic Tiger. The downside though is that many of the new jobs are in low paid sectors, such as the services industry. Among OECD countries, Ireland comes second only to the US in having the highest proportion of its workforce categorised as low-paid. In fact, about one in five low-paid workers may be classified as being in poverty. The majority of these new jobs are also non-unionised and therefore these workers have little rights or job security.

For those lucky enough to be earning a decent wage, it is nearly impossible for them to purchase a home, especially along the east coast, due to exorbitant house prices. In 1994, the ratio of house prices in Dublin to the average industrial wage was 4.3:1. By 1998, it was 8.2:1. One Dublin planning official recently estimated that builders are selling houses for twice the cost that it takes to build them. Alongside the rising house prices has been a complete neglect of public housing. Today, the numbers waiting on public housing lists in Ireland have never been higher.

Despite the supposed boom of the Celtic Tiger economy, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is failing to provide large sections of the Irish people with the basic provisions of decent healthcare, education, housing and income. The Irish people deserve better.



Editorial

PEACE PROCESS FAILS THE PEOPLE

For three years we have heard of the so-called benefits of the peace process. Yet when placed under scrutiny very little tangible change has actually been delivered across the six counties.

Loyalist gangs continue to wage their sectarian campaign with pipe bombs on a daily basis. The increased British military presence in Nationalist areas and their blight on such areas as South Armagh continues to impede and obstruct the day to day lives of local people. The loyalist blockade of the Holy Cross girls school is indicative of the blind sectarian bigotry that is a direct result of the failure of the process to deliver a meaningful political settlement.

In the absence of such a settlement which effectively deals with the issue of upholding national sovereignty the occupied six-county state will continue as a failed political entity based on sectarian tensions and human and political rights abuses.

The denial of Irish National sovereignty and the intransigence of the British government, combined with weak leadership from the proponents of the process have resulted in the British Government's illegal claim to sovereignty being strengthened.

The British Government has not been challenged within the process and it is now evident that those participating cannot challenge having signed up to the British Government's proposals.

It is imperative that the nationalist community and particularly republicans, assess and understand what effect this process has had on the peoples struggle to end British rule in Ireland.

We in the 32 County Sovereignty Movement have not only the correct analysis but we have also mapped out the correct path to pursue our objectives.

Relaunch of 'reformed' RUC

The recent announcement by the SDLP that it is to act as a recruitment body for the RUC marks a new low in the long drawn out process of the 'pan-Nationalist' surrender. The announcement is indicative of the SDLP's increasing desperation in its attempt to regain the meager ministerial trappings of power as Britain's favoured 'Nationalist' son. It is clearly not rooted in any principled analysis of the facts. The British government's 'implementation plan' on policing reform does not even begin to address the fundamental issues at stake. What it offers is cosmetic change for the existing oppressive machinery of the state security apparatus. Sinn Féin's response to the proposals has also been deeply disappointing. It appears that the Patten Report, initially rejected as 'inadequate', has now become the party's 'threshold' for acceptance. Disappointing, but not surprising. The party has repeatedly reneged on its stated 'minimum demands', to the extent that its negotiating credibility now lies in tatters. Only the most naïve participant in the political process would now place any faith in the party's resolve. The British government, certainly, is unlikely to take its 'concerns' seriously, when experience has shown that a humiliating U-turn probably lies just around the corner. Yet all this comes at a time when RUC brutality is increasing, rather than decreasing. There has been a 20% increase in recorded complaints over the last year. 50% of these complaints concerned 'oppressive behaviour', of which 71% involved physical assault. Yet the British government has seen fit to reward the force with a £10 million bonus, bringing its total annual budget to a massive £645 million. The rhetoric of 'demilitarisation', it is clear, does not affect the British government's commitment to maintaining its primary counter-insurgency force in a state of bloated readiness. Like the partitionist state, the RUC is a failed entity. For over eighty years it has acted as the British government's paramilitary garrison in Ireland. The people of the Six Counties need, and deserve, a proper, politically neutral, police service. The RUC must be disbanded immediately.

Media lies

The recent arrests of three Irishmen in Colombia highlighted yet again the disturbing practice of many journalists who accept without question the word of intelligence agencies and government spokespersons. Within a day of the arrests, we were being repeatedly told - by both broadsheet and tabloid alike - that the FARC were heavily involved in drug trafficking. This claim goes against all the evidence. As reported in this month's Sovereign Nation, the US government's own Drug Enforcement Agency has said that it 'hasn't come close to the conclusion that the FARC have been involved as a drug trafficking organisation'. The Colombian President, an opponent of the FARC, has also confirmed this. In fact, everything points to the FARC's opponents in the Colombian military and in the right-wing death squads as being the major drug dealers. It is now several weeks since the arrests and yet none of these journalists have corrected this misinformation. This is a serious failure of journalism on their part. One suspects that this is deliberate obfuscation. Of course, it is not only Colombian revolutionaries who have been tainted with lies about drug dealing in the Irish media. Recently, several broadsheet journalists claimed that Oglagh na hEireann was involved in the drugs trade. This outrageous allegation was supported by a supposed drug find in Co. Monaghan. The journalists failed to question, in the light of previous examples of the Gardaí inventing arms finds, whether these drugs could have been planted by Garda Special Branch. The Gardaí have an obvious vested interest in tarnishing the reputation of the Republican Movement. It seems that certain journalists rely to a large extent for their stories on information from the Gardaí. Clearly the quid pro quo for this information is that it is never to be questioned.

Local Contact Addresses in England and Scotland

PATRICIA McCLOREY

Box 3

149 STATION ROAD, EDGWARE HA8-7JS

Tel: 0792 9318547

32csm.London@amserve.net

Liverpool32csm@hotmail.com Tel: 07904 446 456

oldham32csm@hotmail.com

manchester32csm@hotmail.com

scotland32csm@hotmail.com Tel: 07788 155 266

Letters to the Editor

The Sovereign Nation, PO Box 6328, Rutland St., Dublin 1.

Turkish Hunger Strike

Two years ago, the Turkish regime launched a brutal campaign to crush the resistance of the many thousands of revolutionary Turkish and Kurdish political prisoners it holds in its jails. Central to this campaign was an attempt to strip them of their status as legitimate prisoners of war. In October 2000, the prisoners began a hunger strike in defense of their political status. So far, more than 30 have died.

Political prisoners from across Europe have united in solidarity with our Turkish comrades. The Oglagh na hEireann POWs in Portlaoise Gaol have added their support to this protest. On the first Saturday of each month, political prisoners across the continent will observe a 24-hour solidarity fast in support of their demands.

That this year is the 20th anniversary of the Irish hunger strike makes the plight of our Turkish and Kurdish comrades all the more poignant. The POWs call on all Irish Republicans to

support the demands of the hunger strikers. Twenty years ago, the world rallied to the H-Block banner. Let us return that support today, and ensure that the hunger strikers' sacrifice has not been in vain.

PRO, IRA Unit,
Portlaoise Gaol.

Columbia Three

The effective abandonment of the three Irishmen who were arrested in Columbia marks a despicable new low for the Provisional leadership. So much for the old adage of 'looking after your own'. The media coverage surrounding the event has also failed to identify the real evil afflicting Columbian political life, namely the heinous involvement of US imperialism in the country's affairs.

Clare O'Reilly, Dublin.

No peace in South Armagh

The PIRA's recent decision to decommission is nothing short of scandalous. This decision takes place against the backdrop of ongoing

Loyalist attacks across the six-counties. As a resident of Jonesborough, I can honestly state that there has been absolutely no reduction in the British military presence in South Armagh. British Army helicopter incursions, foot patrols and checkpoints are a regular occurrence. We continue to live under a foreign military occupation. When the people of South Armagh hear certain politicians and the media refer to the benefits of the so-called peace process, it sounds like nothing more than a sick joke.

Concerned Republican,
South Armagh.

Shameful disrespect

Two weeks ago, Sinn Féin indirectly accused the Cuban foreign minister of lying about the SF representative in Havana. This shameful, despicable behaviour is a slap in the face to over thirty years of revolutionary solidarity.

Jane Donnelly, Belfast.

Review

Brits by Peter Taylor

By Deirdre Lynch

Brits: The war against the IRA is the last instalment of Peter Taylor's trilogy tracing the history of the current conflict in Ireland. Through interviews with British soldiers, undercover operatives and government ministers, he tries to document Britain's response to the IRA's armed struggle.

It was with a sense of optimism that I began to read *Brits*: maybe finally the truth about Britain's dirty war in Ireland would be told. But unfortunately it wasn't to be. The early chapters of the book highlight the serious ignorance displayed by the British establishment in the early years of the Troubles. They were quite happy to ignore the institutionalised discrimination that existed in the six counties until it exploded onto television screens across the world. By then it was too late. The British Army brought to Ireland all the lessons it had learned from its other recent colonial wars. Peter Taylor fails to make the connection between this colonial mentality and atrocities carried out by the British Army in Ireland. The British clearly felt that since they had gotten away with atrocities in Kenya, Aden and Cyprus, they would also get away with them in Ireland. This mentality led to such infamous incidents as the Falls Curfew, the use of torture against prisoners and, of course, the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry. With regard to Bloody Sunday, there is one particularly sickening interview where members of the Parachute Regiment say that they felt that it was 'a job well done'.

As the war in Ireland intensified, the British began to adopt new tactics

to reduce the media spotlight on their war against the IRA. This was the creation of special undercover units. Here, Peter Taylor fails to emphasise the real purpose of these units. He maintains that the units such as the Mobile Reconnaissance Force (MRF), 14 Intelligence Unit and the Force Research Unit were established primarily to gather intelligence on Republican activists and that these undercover soldiers were extremely brave men and women who took the fight to the 'terrorists'. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is much evidence that the units existed mainly as shoot-to-kill gangs, who were used to instil terror in the nationalist community, as well as to assassinate Republicans. In fact in the 1970s, the MRF was notorious for its drive-by-shootings, the most infamous being the shooting of five men in Andersonstown in May 1972. In fairness Taylor does mention this incident. He neglects though to mention that the 14th Intelligence Unit and the Force Research Unit were also involved in the shooting of unarmed Republicans and that they regularly passed information onto loyalist death-squads.

Over the years due to the increased controversy of the shoot-to-kill policy, the British decided to change their tactics. As killings by the RUC and British Army decreased and arrests increased (which Taylor puts down to the Brits' increased professionalism) the loyalist death-squads became much more active. Was this a coincidence? Peter Taylor would have us believe so. He doesn't believe that the British actively armed and gave information to the loyalist paramilitaries. He denies any British involvement in the Dublin and

Monaghan bombings. He devotes a whole chapter to Brian Nelson, the British agent, who while working for the UFF was implicated in fifteen murders, fifteen attempted murders and sixty-two conspiracies to murder. After detailing Nelson's activities, Taylor then goes on to dismiss Republican claims of institutionalised collusion. Instead, Taylor seems to suggest that Nelson and his handlers were largely operating on their own initiative and that their actions weren't approved from above. To this reviewer at least, Taylor is being extremely naïve.

However, Taylor does deal well in telling how part of the Provisional Movement's leadership was sucked into the 'peace process'. From the interviews with British politicians and agents, it is clear that this so-called peace process is the just latest tactic being used by the British to try and defeat republicans. But Taylor is again deceived by British propaganda and portrays British political leaders as honest brokers of peace. The chapters on the peace process expose the full extent of the Sinn Féin leadership's naivety in thinking that they could out-negotiate the British when the British were able to dictate so much of the process' agenda. The impression given by the book is that after 30 years the British have won the war. As the recent IRA operation in Ealing, west London shows, this is rather premature.

Brits is a book worth reading; it might be economical with the facts in places but it provides a useful outlining of British strategy and tactics over the past 30 years. One piece of advice though is to wait for it to be published in paperback as at £20, it is a bit over-priced.

Join the 32 County Sovereignty Movement

The 32 County Sovereignty Movement is a single issue campaign group dedicated to achieving Irish national sovereignty. Membership is open to all who accept and sign the 1919 Declaration of Independence.

Contact your local committee or write to:

32 CSM, P.O. Box 7614

Rutland St., Dublin 1.

Webmaster: 32@Ireland.com

Paper sellers and distributors needed. Contact us at the above address.

The Second Palestinian Intifada

THE PALESTINIAN uprising that began in September 2000 has so far claimed almost 700 lives - over 530 Palestinians and 150 Israelis. Joe Cullen reports on the background to this second intifada.

The spark that lit the flame was Ariel Sharon's virtual invasion of the Al-Aqsa mosque in east Jerusalem on the 28th of September last year. Al-Aqsa is the third most sacred site in Islam. Sharon brought with him 1,000 members of the Israeli security forces. It was also the anniversary of the Sabra and Chatilla massacre in Beirut in 1982. Sharon was Israeli Defence Minister at the time of the massacre and was held 'indirectly responsible' by an official Israeli investigation. Unsurprisingly therefore, Sharon is a hate-figure for Palestinians. With Sharon's 'visit' to Al-Aqsa, eight years of Palestinian frustration with the 'peace process' was suddenly released and since then a state of near war has existed between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The previous intifada from 1987 to 1993 brought the Israeli government to the negotiating table. The result was the Oslo Agreement, which was negotiated on the Palestinian side by the PLO leader Yassir Arafat. Oslo was a disaster for Palestinian aspirations. In exchange for Palestinian recognition of Israel and a renunciation of 'terrorism', the US and Israelis recognised Arafat's PLO as the chief negotiators for Palestinians. The Palestinians were to receive municipal government authority of the Gaza Strip, Jericho and a handful of West Bank villages. But all of the fundamental issues that had driven the Palestinian struggle for over half a century - the occupation, the status of

Jerusalem, and the status of Palestinian refugees - were deferred to future negotiations. In 1995, there was a further Oslo Agreement - Oslo II. According to Shimon Peres, the Israeli's chief negotiator 'the [Oslo II] deal kept the following in Israeli hands: 73 per cent of the lands of the territories [West Bank & Gaza Strip], 97 per cent of security and 80 per cent of the water'. The respected Palestinian academic and former member of the Palestinian parliament in-exile, Edward Said referred to the Oslo Agreements as 'the Palestinian leadership's betrayal of national aspirations i.e. the right to self-determination, political freedom and the inalienable right to an independent state'. Most of the more recent attempts at reaching agreement, especially last year's Camp David talks, have consisted of the US and Israel trying to pressurise the Palestinians into abandoning the right of return principle concerning the 700,000 Palestinians who were forcibly expelled in 1948. This right was established in international law under UN Resolution 194 in December 1948. They have also tried to get Palestinians to abandon the idea of having Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state. Instead, they have offered them the dusty village of Abu Dis, on the outskirts of Jerusalem as their new capital.

If the Oslo Agreement was bad for Palestinians, things have gotten even worse since then. A UN special report published last November states 'In the past seven years...Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land and construction of settlements and by-pass roads for Jewish settlers has accelerated dramatically in breach of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and of provisions of the Oslo Agreements requiring both parties to respect the "territorial integrity and unity of the West Bank and Gaza Strip"'. Since

1993, the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has doubled to 200,000 and has increased to more than 170,000 in east Jerusalem. The trip from Hebron to Ramallah takes less than an hour along the bypasses built exclusively for Israeli settlers. For Palestinians it is a three to four hour journey. The Israeli army keeps the 200,000 Palestinian population of Hebron under a curfew in order to 'protect' the 400 fanatical Jewish settlers in their midst. The report also condemned the demolition of Palestinian houses (which contravenes article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention), the diversion of water to Israeli cities and settlements (90 per cent of West Bank water is used by the settlers, who comprise 10 per cent of the population), the policy of closures that has damaged Palestinian social and economic life, and the 'widespread violation of their economic, social and cultural rights'.

Of the one million resident of Gaza, 80 per cent have fallen below the poverty line. Half survive on emergency UN rations. Two-thirds of the workforce is now unemployed. The West Bank, now effectively partitioned into 60 islands, has hardly fared better. Poverty has quadrupled to where it now affects half the population. One third of the West Bank workforce are now unemployed. The International Red Cross has said that for the first time since 1967, some West Bank villages are now so destitute that starvation is a possibility if the current situation persists.

Over the past ten months, there have been several attempts to get a ceasefire into place. The Americans have led most of the mediation efforts. Given the fact that America is Israel's biggest supporter - funding Israel to the tune of at least \$4 billion annually - it is not surprising that most of the pressure that the Americans

exert during talks is in the direction of the Palestinians. Former US Senator George Mitchell, who had previously been involved in the Good Friday Agreement in Ireland, led the main US effort. In May of this year, he published a set of proposals aimed at securing agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians. These included the demand for a complete ceasefire and the complete freeze on further settlement building. The Palestinian Authority immediately agreed to the proposals. Sharon's government replied that if there were a ceasefire, followed by a 'significant cooling-off period', he would then be willing to discuss the settlements. The insertion of pre-conditions into the proposals amounted to a virtual Israeli rejection of Mitchell's plan. In case there was any doubt of the Israeli response to the peace initiative, Sharon ordered F-16 bombers to bomb Palestinian towns. It was the first time warplanes had been used in the intifada. Twelve Palestinian policemen died in these air raids.

Predictably, the Western media coverage of the intifada has largely been one-sided and pro-Israeli. As Edward Herman points out: the language the media use is prime evidence of their partiality. When the Serbs forced Kosovo Albanians from their homes, the Western media called it 'ethnic cleansing'. But the same term is not used when Israelis force Palestinians from their homes. The four-to-one ratio of killings in terms of Palestinians and Israelis is neutralised by the greater attention given to Israeli victims. Robert Fisk of *The Independent* observes, 'Such journalism is already leading - despite the extraordinary casualty figures - to a public view that the Palestinians are solely responsible for the bloodbath, that they are generally violent, untrustworthy murderers. I think this kind of reporting

helps condone the taking of human life.'

The ten-month old intifada has also hardened attitudes among both Palestinians and Israelis. A recent poll carried out in Birzeit University in the West Bank found that 78 per cent of Palestinians wanted the intifada to continue, and 74 per cent supported the suicide bombings. A similar poll in Tel Aviv University found that 64 per cent of Jewish Israelis believe insufficient force is being used against the Palestinians and 70 per cent support Sharon's policy of assassinating Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists.

For Palestinians there is no Israeli justice. Israeli soldiers are not being punished for murdering Palestinian children. The only inquiry that has been set up is into the killing of 13 unarmed Israeli Arab demonstrators last October. For Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, there are no inquiries. Only last January, an Israeli Jew, Nahum Korman, who chased, kicked and beat to death a 12-year-old Palestinian boy was sentenced to six months community service. Is it any wonder that Palestinians believe that an uprising is the only possible answer to their situation?

In the coming months, it is likely that Arafat will come under ever-increasing pressure from the US and Israel to accept a deal that abandons Palestinian aspirations. It is quite possible that Arafat will make a deal and further betray the Palestinian people. If he does embark on that course, he will almost certainly lose whatever remaining support he has. A truncated Palestinian state is not what the Palestinian people have struggled for over the past century and they are not likely to accept such a settlement now.

America's Plan Columbia

THE RECENT arrests of three Irishmen in Columbia resulted in that country's civil war receiving widespread media attention. Joe Cullen explores the background to the conflict and the American government's sinister role in it.

Columbia has a long history of internal strife going back to 1810, when as one of Latin America's poorest and most divided countries it gained independence from Spain. During the nineteenth century the ruling landlords divided political power between the Conservative and Liberal parties. These two parties have ruled Columbia ever since.

In the 1950s, poor peasants began taking over unused land in the central and southern regions of the country. With the training and support of the US government, the Columbian army and right-wing death squads began a vicious campaign to displace them. These death squads have killed 300,000 people in the past 50 years (35,000 in the 1990s). In response, the peasants formed the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) in 1966. FARC's demands were simple: land reform, human rights in the countryside and the unionisation of workers.

Columbia is a country rich in oil and mineral wealth. Foreign multinational corporations such as BP, Occidental Petroleum, Shell and Texaco control most of this wealth. Opposed to FARC's socialism, these companies have supported the Columbian military and the death

squads. In recent years, the oil companies have been paying a \$1 per barrel war tax to the Columbian army and BP has directly subsidized new military units. Columbia is also becoming increasingly important for the US's oil needs. As America tries to reduce its dependence on Middle Eastern oil, Columbian oil production has risen from 100,000 barrels per day in 1980 to 850,000 barrels per day in 1999.

The American government has been intervening in the affairs of every Latin American country since the nineteenth century. Columbia is no exception. As already noted, the US provided support for the Columbian army in the 1960s in its war against landless peasants. This support has increased dramatically in recent years. As part of what the US calls 'Plan Columbia', it approved \$1.3 billion worth of mainly military aid to the Columbian government in 2000. In July of this year, the US approved an extra \$676 million in aid. This makes Columbia the third largest recipient of American finance after Israel and Egypt. For years, the US has been training Columbian army officers at its School of the Americas base in Fort Benning, Georgia. According to the Latin America Working Group, of the 247 senior Columbian military personnel linked to human rights violations, 124 are graduates of Fort Benning. The US has also publicly acknowledged that it has over 200 military 'advisers' in Columbia. This is reminiscent of the Vietnam War, which started out with a similar number of US military advisers.

Ostensibly, the reason for US involvement in Columbia is to fight the "War Against Drugs". The US State Department claims that FARC is heavily involved in the international drugs trade. However, according to the head of the United States' own Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Donnie Mitchell, 'the DEA hasn't come close to the conclusion that the FARC have been involved as a drug trafficking organisation'. Even the Columbian President, Andres Pastrana, who is vehemently opposed to the FARC has also conceded that 'there is no evidence that the FARC are drug traffickers'. So, if FARC aren't dealing in drugs, then who is? The main drug dealers in Columbia are the right wing death squads and the military. According to the DEA, one of the main drug traffickers is Carlos Castana, who is also the leader of the biggest right wing death squad, the AUC. It is estimated that these death squads have been responsible for eighty per cent of killings in Columbia in recent years. In 1999, the FARC tracked Castana down to his hideout. He was only saved when US military intelligence and the Columbian army in US-sponsored helicopters intervened. Earlier, in November 1998, US Customs found 415 kg of cocaine in a Columbian Air Force plane in Florida. Several Columbian Air Force officers were jailed as a result. Even more embarrassing for the US was when its officer in charge of training Columbian 'counter-narcotics' soldiers, Colonel James Hiett, pleaded guilty to smuggling heroin from Columbia to New York. So while America may claim to be fighting a

war against drugs in Columbia, the evidence shows that it is actually its allies that are the main drug dealers.

Of course, this isn't the first time that America has pursued this type of hypocritical policy. In the 1980s, it supported Manuel Noriega in Panama when it was well known that he was involved in drug trafficking. Similarly, in the 1980s, the US justified supporting the Contras in Nicaragua as part of its 'war against drugs' there. We later learned, in the Iran-Contra Affair, that the US was actually supplying weapons to the Contras in return for cocaine.

In the rural areas that the FARC now controls, it acts much like a local state: collecting taxes, providing services like basic health care and education, administering justice and acting as a protection force for civilians from military and paramilitary attacks. It is quite likely that FARC does generate some of its income by taxing the local coca leaf growers. But it is also true that FARC taxes all businesses in its area and it is also the case that FARC leaders have called for economic investment in the countryside that would reduce peasants' dependence on coca plants. Besides, it is the shameful economic conditions that force peasants to grow the coca leaves in the first place. Over fifty per cent of Columbians live below the poverty line and eighty per cent earn less than four dollars a day. Also as a result of the use of death squads by the military and multi-national companies, there are almost two million displaced persons within Columbia.

Many of these have gone to the edge of the rain forest where they clear a few hectares of land and grow coca leaf. It is the only crop that will allow them to survive. It hasn't always been like this though. Up to the 1950s, Columbia was a major wheat producer. This was undermined by the US Food For Peace programme, which provided taxpayers subsidies to US agribusiness. The result was the rapid collapse in the price of Columbian wheat, which no longer made it economically viable for peasants to produce. Columbia's coffee industry was similarly damaged in the late 1980s as a result of US economic policy.

For the past few years, there has been a peace process of sorts in Columbia. President Pastrana has recognised an area in southern Columbia, the size of Switzerland, as an autonomous FARC zone. However, Pastrana is coming under increasing US pressure to end the peace process and to use the huge American military aid to try and defeat the FARC. As regards FARC, they only too well remember the previous peace process that occurred in the mid-1980s. At that time, FARC began to disarm and it helped found a new political party, the Patriotic Union. Many of its members were elected to office. The US-supported right wing death squads responded by killing almost 5,000 members of the PU, including its Presidential candidate and several town mayors. Whatever the future this peace process holds, it is unlikely that FARC will allow themselves to be left so vulnerable again.

Sponsored Walk

On Sunday August 25, members of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement along with other supporters took part in a sponsored walk in aid of the Irish Republican Prisoners dependents in Hyde Park London.

The distance of over 6 miles was covered in two and a half hours amidst a jovial atmosphere. The committee and members wish to thank all those who took part in the walk, and their sponsors.



Some participants of the Sponsored Walk.

BELFAST IRPWA UP AND RUNNING

The prison struggle has so often been a highly emotive issue throughout Irish Republican history. It is acknowledged that incarceration has always placed the revolutionary at the forefront of the battle between a liberation movement and the state (as can be seen from the early prison writings of Thomas Clarke through to the contemporary accounts by George Jackson and Bobby Sands). However, it becomes obvious when studying these accounts that the ethos of resistance does not just depend upon the strength of an individual but also on the practical and moral support of an outside community.

It was with this in mind that the Belfast Branch of the Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association came into being. Starting with a rota of door-to-door collections in different areas each night, we have quickly realised that the Nationalist people are more than prepared to give substantial donations, it can be honestly stated that in most areas those who 'don't give' are indeed the exception. A knock-on effect of this activity is that it has also given us a direct dialogue with the community, and one which also acts as an awareness raising exercise. One concern amongst a significant minority we met was the bewilderment that there still existed any Republican prisoners after the releases under the Stormont Agreement. Political prisoners having naturally been marginalized by the British and Provisional media it was no wonder that some thought this the case!

The collections have become such a feature in some areas that those involved are regularly stopped on the doorstep by those eager to enquire about the ongoing campaign for political status, or to ask about individual prisoners who come from the area. Remarkable is the amount of money given by those who seem least able to afford it. Old age pensioners putting a few pound coins in the tin, or those quite obviously scraping by on state benefits doing the same, are such examples. In one instance a group of West Belfast street corner drinkers digging deep to donate raised a few eyebrows! Taken altogether, it is no doubt that support for the prison cause runs deep.

During a public meeting to highlight the prison issue at Conway Mill education centre, both Marion Price (representing IRA prisoners) and Paul Little (representing INLA prisoners) were in agreement suggesting there was a myth surrounding the 1981 hunger-strike that "the community rose spontaneously in response to the prison struggle". This, they said, ignored the isolation and failure of the 1980 blanket protest I hunger-strike and the amount of work that had to be put in 'on the ground' by local activists to create awareness and support for the second phase. The truth we live with is that twenty years-on the pain and suffering of those days is still a raw nerve in the community, but due to this the Nationalist people are becoming more aware of the direct parallels between the fight for political status in 1981 and that in 2001. In Belfast the next stage will be to initiate a rolling program of activities (alongside our usual concerns of practical financial support) including high-profile stunts and protests.

Compassionate TR - a right denied

Martin O'Shea, a frequent visitor to Portlaoise, outlines the situation POWs find themselves in when a family member falls ill

AS SOME Republican prisoners in Portlaoise Gaol enter into their last 6 months incarceration, I feel compelled to highlight the present situation they find themselves in. Under a scheme drawn up by the Minister for Justice (the 'pre-release scheme') these men should be entitled by his criteria to six temporary releases in the time they have remaining. Unfortunately, this is not the case. These men find themselves subject to a blatant policy of discrimination, denied access to legal rights freely available to criminals and pro-Agreement political prisoners.

But these restrictions are just the tip of the iceberg. Republican prisoners in Portlaoise are now being denied access to compassionate TR - the right to a temporary release to visit sick or dying family members. For as long as Republicans have been incarcerated in Portlaoise, they have always been granted this right. Yet, as it currently stands, these men are just about released for the death of an immediate family member. There have been cases where parents, brothers, sisters, wives and even children have lain in hospital, some terminally ill, and yet their imprisoned relatives have been denied the right to visit them. In some cases men have had to endure an agonizing wait

for days as the life slipped from their loved ones, and, even then, were still denied the last few hours to say farewell. Their situation stands in stark contrast to that of pro-Agreement prisoners, including individuals imprisoned after the signing of the Agreement, who have been able to freely avail of this basic human right.

Yet the Dublin government has heaped insult upon injury, ignoring prisoners' requests for information on the criteria used to judge TR applications. Minister John O'Donoghue, and his representative in the Department of Justice, Michael O'Neill, who deal with Republican prisoners' applications, routinely deny them even the courtesy of a reply. It is left up to the prison authorities to embarrassingly fumble about, trying to make excuses for their silence.

These men are now left with no option but to go before the courts again, and face a traditionally hostile judiciary in their struggle to gain access to the temporary release system openly available to other prisoners throughout the country. Their prospects of a fair hearing are bleak. If the prisoners are to have any chance in court, the Dublin government will have to lift its

unofficial restrictions on the Freedom of Information Act - restrictions which seem to apply only to political prisoners unafraid to exercise their so called constitutional rights. So far, inquiries from the prisoners and their legal representatives have met with a wall of silence.

However, while the future of this issue may look bleak at the moment, the government should not underestimate the persistence and determination of these men in their struggle for what should be a basic human right. That government is no stranger to the rhetoric of human rights, and is often vocal in its denunciations of their abuse by governments abroad. But such rhetoric will remain empty while those same rights are being ignored at home. Perhaps former President Mary Robinson, now UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, should turn her sights towards home once again. An unlikely prospect, admittedly, given the deafening silence on Irish affairs maintained by this once vocal critic of government policy since her elevation to the political elite.

The Dublin government should be under no illusions about the determination of these men, who will continue to highlight the injustices imposed on them and on Irish society as a whole.

Republican POWs

The following is a complete list of sentenced O'laigh na hEireann prisoners in Portlaoise Gaol.

Name	D.O.B.	County	Sentence
Damien Lawless	9-1-69	Louth	3yrs
Anthony Ryan	22-8-75	Dublin	3yrs
Frank Nolan	9-10-62	Dublin	3yrs
John McNamara	28-1-62	Kildare	3yrs
Martin Conlon	12-11-69	Armagh	4yrs
Seamus MacGreevy	25-10-53	Meath	4yrs
Seamus McGrane	26-5-54	Louth	4yrs
Dermot Gannon	13-10-65	Dublin	4yrs
Sean Connolly	3-12-78	Dublin	4yrs
Thomas Larkin	9-4-56	Louth	5yrs
Anton Beggs	24-12-62	Dublin	5yrs
Paul McIntyre	15-7-78	Dublin	6yrs
Saoirse Breathnach	9-7-74	Dublin	7yrs
Alan Ryan	3-6-80	Dublin	7yrs
Philip Forsyth	9-10-73	Dublin	7yrs
Gerard Moyna	28-8-54	Antrim	7yrs
Pascal Burke	9-1-64	Dublin	8yrs
Larry Keane	28-3-57	Kildare	10yrs
Paddy McDonagh	7-10-63	Louth	10yrs
Kieran McDonagh	19-8-61	Louth	10yrs
Kevin Murray	13-5-53	Louth	12yrs
Liam Grogan	1-1-77	Kildare	22yrs
Darren Mulholland	28-2-79	Louth	22yrs
Tony Hyland	13-9-72	Dublin	25yrs
Danny McAllister	26-2-55	Dublin	8yrs

Prisoners can be contacted at the following address:
E2, Portlaoise Prison, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

Jimmy Drumm (1920-2001)

REPUBLICANS throughout Ireland were saddened by the death of the veteran Belfast Republican, Jimmy Drumm, who died aged 81, on July 18.

Jimmy Drumm's life can best be characterised as one of militant activism. His dedication to the Irish freedom struggle was total. During the course of his life, Jimmy became one of the longest serving Republican prisoners in Ireland. However, due to the abnormal political situation in the six-counties, Jimmy was never sentenced by any court of law. He was interned without trial during the 1938-45, 1956-61 and 1971-75 periods by both the Stormont regime and the British state. The time-span covering these periods of incarceration clearly illustrates Jimmy Drumm's unwavering dedication to the Irish freedom struggle.

Jimmy Drumm was a fluent Irish speaker who served at the highest levels of the Republican movement during his many years of political activism. Many people were of the

opinion that Jimmy excelled in the arena of publicity. An articulate advocate of the Irish Republican struggle, Jimmy was a regular point of contact for journalists from Ireland and around the world.

During the 1975 Bilateral truce between the Republican movement and the British government, Jimmy Drumm along with Proinsias Mac Airt were the two senior Republican representatives who regularly met senior British government representatives in a bilateral system of local incident centres that monitored the political situation during the truce.

On October 28, 1976 Jimmy's wife Maire was murdered by a Loyalist gang in the Mater hospital, Belfast. Maire Drumm was a life long Republican activist and was Vice-President of Sinn Féin between 1970-76.

In June 1977, Jimmy Drumm delivered a keynote oration at the annual Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodensown. In his speech, he stated that the Irish Republican struggle needed to be radically trans-

formed across the 32 counties in order to advance, and he warned of the dangers of viewing the struggle in a narrow, partitionist, six-county context.

Jimmy Drumm was no supporter of the Sinn Féin 'peace strategy', and throughout his life he remained true to the principles of the Irish Republican struggle.

Jimmy Drumm's remains were removed to St. Agnes Church, Andersonstown on July 20. The coffin was draped in a Tricolor. The Felons' Club provided the Guard of Honour. Following the early morning mass on July 21, the cortege travelled to Milltown cemetery where Jimmy Drumm was laid to rest beside his beloved wife Maire.

The 32 County Sovereignty Movement would like to extend its deepest sympathies to Jimmy's sons Seamus and Sean, his daughters Margaret, Catherine and Maire Og, and to the extended Drumm family. Our thoughts are with you during these sad times.